

STUDY: CHEMO WASTED ON TERMINAL PATIENTS

By Adam Miller

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Dying cancer patients are often treated with grueling chemotherapy drugs that do nothing against their form of the dreaded disease, a new study found.

According to researchers at the National Institutes of Health, chemotherapy drugs are overused and often unnecessary in treating patients in the final months of terminal cancer.

“Providing chemotherapy to patients with unresponsive tumors is hard to justify,” said NIH cancer doctor and bioethicist Ezekiel Emanuel.

Emanuel and a team of doctors pored over Medicare records from 7,919 patients who succumbed to cancer in Massachusetts. They found that about 30 percent received chemo in the six months before their death.

Patients with melanoma, renal cell and gallbladder cancers, none of which respond to drug therapy, were treated as regularly as those suffering from breast, colon and other cancers, researchers said.

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